

# THE FADE IN

By Mildred Cram.

"New York was too small for Pug Fairchild."

ILLUSTRATED BY F. C. YOUNG.

**N**EW YORK was too small for Pug Fairchild. It was not broad enough, deep enough, long enough, or thick enough through. Pug was young, and he needed room for action. He came from Boston with an engineer's degree in his pocket and the whole wide world before him. Naturally, New York didn't go very far. Pug had the young American habit of jumping through hoops—every hoop a new pleasure—without so much as stubbing his toe.

"Whatever there is to do," his father said, "you can come back and we'll talk over the business of life."

They shook hands solemnly, and Pug pranced out into the city looking for action. He got it. You see, he had an inexhaustible thirst for life—not life as most men think it is, but life as Pug wanted to live it. If he encountered a sentiment, he took it apart and examined the pieces until one puzzled him—a man, a waiter, a philosopher, or a woman—he always satisfied his curiosity. It wasn't enough to ride in the subway; he wanted to know who thought of it, who began with: who built it, and who ran it. He was as exhaustless as a terrier. It was never too much trouble to find the most hidden springs of vitality, the sources of energy.

"Your son has St. Vitus' dance," one told Pug's dad.

"Not at all," the old man answered, with a smile. "It's the punch. Just now his style is cramped. When he has exhausted New York I shall open the door into the wide world and show him out—there isn't room for him here—but there isn't room for him here." Then you will lose him."

PUG'S father shook his head and looked across the top of his mahogany desk, through the plate-glass windows of his expensive downtown office, beyond the crowding towers and pinnacles of the city to the open harbor. There was a shadow of wistful longing in his eyes, as if he were losing him. "He's got it," he said, "but don't let him go. You see, I'm afraid he's got it."

Pug had a kindred smile, wherever he went, because the world was so full of a number of things. He tackled New York with the glee of an undefeated lightweight—pawing the ring and snapping good-naturedly for the fun of the thing. If any one tried to hurt him, he trinned him up, sat on his chest, and tickled him until he cried for help.

"There are lots of things to learn," he said, after one morning at breakfast. "New York has more up its sleeve than I imagined."

But Pug's dad scarcely glanced at the news. He shrugged his shoulders slightly, gave the paper an embarrassed shake, and said: "Let me know when you've had enough."

Pug laid down his awful pen. "Take me out," he said. "Mr. Fairchild put 'The Times' down and stared over his glasses at Pug. When he saw reassured him—Pug's smirking smile, his sharp, cool, smooth brown hair, his serious eyes—they looked at each other gravely for a moment. Pug had one-stepped through the parental door very early that morning, and his dad had a headache behind his serious eyes. But his hands were steady and his smile was as joyous as ever. He waited, with an uneasy feeling around his heart, while his eyes rested on him with a look that was both quizzical and affectionate. Then he laughed, striking the answering shout in his dad, as he knew he would.

"Dad," he said devoutly, "you're a wonderful sport."

Yes, Pug was doing his best to jump through all the holes. He tried. You can't live here before he lost his own breath. He danced on his polished hardwood floor between Harlem and the Battery. He knew every head waiter, every talented mixer of delectable concoctions, every hotel in the town. He understood the subtle technique of reserving tables and tipping restaurant waiters. He had a nodding acquaintance with box-office tyrants, and he knew how to find out what they wanted. He had the wonderful privilege of taking certain lovely follies out to supper, perhaps because he never made love to them and understood the peculiar patois of Broadway. He had been drummed along on his feet. He had driven a taxi half-way up the steps of the Public Library. He had gambled; he had flushed in and out of dozens of studies where he had been good, and indifferent, and bad. He had listened to serious music and had liked it; he had absorbed American rags-time through the soles of his feet, and he liked that, too. He laughed his way into New York, seeking the Santa Christina, into a club mart. You couldn't tell him out; he was never bored. He blew into New York like a fresh west wind. By the time he had breezed half-way through Manhattan, his temper had become a tornado, a synonym for zip, pepper, punch—whatever it is one calls the zest of youth. He never stopped for breath except when he took a Turkish bath or went actually to sleep.

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"WELL," his dad said, when he caught sight of him again one morning at breakfast, "there seems nothing left in the way of speed except a racing car and an aeroplane. I'll give you both."

Pug laughed. "How about the business of life?"

"No, sir. Only—"

"Only what?"

"I've used up New York. I think I've played on all the instruments except the big hand drum. I don't want a racing car or an aeroplane. I want a job."

Then Pug's father leaned back in his chair and rubbed his chin. His laugh was an imitation; the tears were not. He wiped them away with a big fresh linen handkerchief and leaned across the table, his chin on his dad's shoulder. They stared at each other solemnly, for they were sentimental men, sentimental in the good old American way. Pug's dad had a secret, an ardent desire, a bright hope at the altar of consecration. His dad held the sword with which he would attack the world—the mysterious, beautiful, powerful "job," the in-

is done by rope-haul, slow, and old-fashioned. We are going to run the new road clear across this valley and up into the lower banks of the river where the New York mines are. Now, Pug, listen to me. We sent the Magellan's got him—literally, I mean."

Pug's eyes flashed. "You mean they sent him to Magella?"

"Something like that. At any rate, he's dead. This isn't an easy job. You've got to conquer the Magellans first, and the mountains afterward. The mountains are down there, waiting orders from me, or three young fellows like yourself, good engineers, but not willing to take the initiative. I can't guarantee their safety, you see. I'm going to send them right there because I think you'd find room to swing your arms. Is it a go?"

Pug made a gesture of acceptance that was a tirade of ecstasy. He had no words, but if it goes well, all he managed to say was, "Well, my boy."

"Then sit down here," his dad said, gravely, "and I'll tell you what I expect you to do."

And then Pug ran down the steps of his East 56th street home and sprinted northward to West 57th street, pushing New York out of his way with both elbows. There was a girl—He explained breathlessly to her mother—that she had seen Pug serious, and it frightened her a little. He was tense in the circle of his arms, almost hostile, with his shoulders hunched forward, with his smile. She fancied for a moment that he was steering himself for her sake, and she said again: "I want you to succeed. Then I'll marry you. Make good, Pug dear, and come back to me."

He caught her hands suddenly and grimmed. "You aren't serious, are you?"

Just for a moment her smile struggled to break through and upset all her little convictions. It was not easy to resist Pug. And it suddenly became no respecter of persons least of all, director's sons. Pug was a girl—He explained breathlessly to her mother—that she had seen Pug serious, and it frightened her a little. He was tense in the circle of his arms, almost hostile, with his shoulders hunched forward, with his smile. She fancied for a moment that he was steering himself for her sake, and she said again: "I want you to succeed. Then I'll marry you. Make good, Pug dear, and come back to me."

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